

0 0001 00194568 0

PY H673.2  
G 9460

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LIBRARY  
DOCUMENTATION




A Guide  
to  
OLD ECONOMY  
Third and Last Home of the  
Harmony Society  
1824 - 1905

Administered by the  
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission  
Ambridge, Pennsylvania

by

Daniel B Reibel

Fourth Edition



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2016 with funding from

This project is made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries

## A TOUR OF OLD ECONOMY

"Hail! Tranquil spectator from the true point of view, who in our 19th Century can discover the outline and building plan of wisdom, where a united brother people is the mansion of God, a divine tabernacle full of virtue and strength!"  
(George Rapp, et al) Thoughts on the Destiny of Man, particularly With Reference to the present times; by the Harmony Society in Indiana, A.D. 1824, p. 15.

In order that you may better understand what you will see, it might be a good idea to know a little about the remarkable Harmony Society. This Society was made up of a group of German peasants who were the followers of George Rapp. They, in common with other pietists, believed in the following things:

**PIETISM.** The Harmony Society was an heir to the pietistic movement during the 17th Century. A pietist believed that one had to experience religion---one could not just practice it; hence, one had no need of a dogma, a priest, or, even, a church. The Harmony Society had none of these.

**BROTHERHOOD.** Harmony, in a sense, meant fellowship. The whole community partook of this. Members were part of a mystical brotherhood living as brothers and sisters in Christ. They not only practiced it among themselves, they extended brotherly love to the whole world.

**CHILIASM:** This comes from the Greek word for one thousand; hence, a belief in the millennium. If the Harmonists had only one tenet this was it. They were preparing for the millennium, which they expected any day, and as soon as it arrived they expected to go on living as they were. Economy, then, represented an anticipation of heaven.

**COMMUNITARIANISM.** This was a belief typical of religiously-oriented societies---a practice they acquired from the Bible. If a member had no worldly goods they felt he would not worry about the world. Since the millennium was coming one did not need property. In the case of the Harmony Society this practice was not fully adopted until a short time after they came to the United States (February, 1805).

**CELIBACY.** This was another belief typical of a number of communal societies. The communitarian society tried to alter the family, and celibacy was an easy way to do it. The community tried to take the place of the family. Celibacy was not fully adopted by the Society until 1807.



PACIFISM. As a society attempting to return to the beliefs of the first Christians, they could not carry on war but they should turn the other cheek. One of the reasons they left Germany was that the Napoleonic War was about to engulf them. In the United States they felt some hostility from their neighbors because they would not participate in the War of 1812.

Many other "isms" could be attached at least to the leaders of the Society, who were partly mystics, cabalists, and alchemists, and who had other semi-religious beliefs which would be expected of pietists; but these were minor occupations of great minds.

Although the Society was primarily a religious one, it also was an industrious one. This should be taken in two ways: they believed in hard work (the clock on the church has no minute hand); they also believed in the benefits of being industrial---that is, in manufacturing.

OUT OF THESE BELIEFS AND THEIR HARD WORK, THEY PRODUCED ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST COMMUNITARIAN SOCIETIES IN AMERICA.

#### HISTORY OF THE HARMONY SOCIETY

The Harmony Society was begun in southern Germany by a man named George Rapp in the little town of Iptingen, in Württemberg. George Rapp was born in 1757 and was reared as a vine dresser and weaver. At some time in his late twenties (ca. 1785) he had some sort of religious experience and began holding prayer meetings in his home. He preached a brand of pietism and belief in the imminence of the second coming. With some persecution from the official state church (Lutheran) and the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars Rapp apparently felt uncomfortable in Germany, so he decided to emigrate. He chose the United States as the best place to find religious freedom.

In 1803 Rapp came to this country, leaving his followers in the hands of Frederick Reichert, soon to be his adopted son. He came to Pennsylvania, perhaps because there were already several German Societies here. He could not speak English. His followers came over in 1804, one shipload landing in this country on July 4, a holiday ever after with the Harmony Society. After traveling the length of the State and into Ohio, Rapp found what he was looking for in Butler County, Pennsylvania. He purchased land there and started clearing it with the help of hired laborers.

#### HARMONY, PENNSYLVANIA

The new town was probably intended to be a German peasant community, with the farmers living in the village and going out to their fields each day. The town was a planned one, with a grid arrangement of streets and a town square. The temporary log structures were built around the edge, so that they would not be in the way of the permanent brick buildings to be built in the center. This was the pattern they were to follow in their other two communities.

The first winter must have been quite an experience for the settlers, who were completely unused to the frontier. They had landed in this country too late to plant a crop, and the first winter was a hard one. They decided to form a "community." This was formed in February, 1805, by "George Rapp and his associates." It was called The Harmony Society. They wrote articles of association, which were signed by all members who agreed. Although eventually the Harmony Society had several other articles of agreement, the original articles were the ones which held them together for one hundred years. Under these articles the Society agreed to clothe, feed, and maintain its members, and in turn the members agreed to give all of their property to the Society and to work for it. Although the first few years of the Society were hard, the Harmony Society prospered under the articles of agreement.

To avoid problems of terminology, historians call these communities "communitarian," "utopian," "social experiments," depending on the type. However, the Harmonists' idea came from the early Christian communes, where all the members pooled their property. They might be called "Christian communists." They were not Marxian socialists; in fact, Marx ignored these communities in Capital.

The idea of the practice of celibacy just grew. This also was a belief common to these chiliastic societies. The millennium was coming in their generation, so why have children? Sex was considered evil. Had not Adam been driven out of Eden after Eve arrived? Celibacy was adopted in 1807 but was never a tenet, although almost universally practiced. A few children were born and marriages conducted after the rule was adopted; George Rapp's own granddaughter was born after the rule. However, only a little over two hundred children were born in the 98-year period remaining to the Society. In a group embracing, perhaps, a total of almost twelve hundred people, this was very few. The idea was to live as brother and sister; and married couples joining later were expected to do the same.

The Society quickly became a prosperous farming and manufacturing community. Although their neighbors thought that they were rather strange, they were at peace. However, they wanted to move within a few years. They petitioned Congress for land as early as 1806. They wanted room to expand, and they needed to be on a big river. Right after the War of 1812 they decided to move.

### HARMONY, INDIANA

They selected land in the Territory of Indiana near the mouth of the Wabash River. They were then on the main river artery of Indiana and only a few miles from the Ohio River. Here, in 1814, George Rapp, with about a hundred workmen, started building the new town, which also was called "Harmony." As was the original Harmony, this was a planned community in the form of a grid, with a town square. The temporary log houses again were built on the outskirts so that they would not interfere with the permanent buildings. Mills and homes were set up. One of the mills was run by steam power, a relative innovation in Indiana at that time. The Harmony Society helped set up the new state and was one of the reasons for its early prosperity. But, for some reason, they decided to move again. In 1824 Rapp offered the land for sale and started to look for a new home.



## ECONOMY, PENNSYLVANIA

They turned again to Pennsylvania. One of their agents had told them of some land at the southern end of Beaver County, an area with which the Harmonists were already familiar. They sold their old home to Robert Owen, the reformer of New Lanark, Scotland. Again Rapp brought about one hundred workmen with him and prepared to set up a new home for the third time. They arrived in Pennsylvania in June, 1824, and started building the houses for the community which was soon to follow. As in the other communities, they built their temporary structures away from their intended center. These first houses still stand on the present Fifteenth Street in Ambridge. In 1825 the rest of the community followed.

Robert Owen renamed the second Harmony "New Harmony," the name it still bears. His "experiment" is much better known than that of the Harmonists, but it was not successful, failing after a few years.

The Harmonists' new town was called "Economy" (Oekonomie) instead of "Harmony" because this time the Harmonists had a different type of town in mind. The other two towns had been primarily agricultural villages, but the new town was to be a manufacturing center. "Economy" in one sense means "the divine economy." This was what they called their method of communal living. This was to be a community where the Society would go into manufacturing on a large scale. Their original purchase of land was only 3,000 acres, which was enough acreage on which to grow food but was not enough for large-scale farming.

In a few years they had their people well housed and their mills built. Their greatest efforts went into the manufacture of cloth, but they also had a large flour mill, a winery, and a distillery, as well as many small operations such as brickmaking, lumber, furniture, etc. As soon as they had completed this phase they started building the permanent buildings. These are some of the buildings to be seen on tour. The main part of the town was started about 1828 and completed about 1831. This included the building of approximately one hundred and ten houses, as well as numerous barns, shops, mills, and docks.

They immediately became a power in the economic circles of western Pennsylvania. There was only one major crisis to mar their calm. In 1831 a "Count" de Leon, who had been corresponding with George Rapp, made his appearance. His essential belief seemed to be that he was the anointed of God. Rapp, of course, refused to accept this, but allowed de Leon to stay through the winter. When de Leon left he took about a third (about two hundred and fifty) of the Harmonists with him. In a settlement Rapp gave them \$105,000 in exchange for their waiving any rights in the Society. This affair was a blow to the Society, for a large number of these were young people whom the Society needed to supply some of its vigor. The seceders founded the town of Philipsburg (now Monaca), and found that de Leon was no leader. They also ran through the \$105,000. Some of them came back in 1833 as a mob, demanding more money from Rapp because the conditions of the contract, they said, had not been met. True to his pacifist principles, Rapp refused to defend himself, other than to bar the door. The mob stormed the Great House but eventually, as one story goes, was cooled down by a tub of water thrown by the women of the house. The militia then arrived and drove the raiders off. This was the end of that episode.



The Harmonists weathered the depression of 1837 with comparative ease. They were not speculators so they lost little in the crash. With a large amount of capital they were able to exert some control on the Pittsburgh market and were sometimes charged with monopoly. They became a model community, prosperous and successful.

### THE DECLINE OF THE SOCIETY

Several events marred the future of the Society. The greatest was the death of George Rapp in 1847. This must have been a blow to the Society, as they had expected him to lead them into the millennium. His death raised the question of leadership. The Senior Trustee, Romelius Baker, one of the business agents of the Society, succeeded to the leadership. At his death (1868) the Junior Trustee, Jacob Henrici, became the leader. Henrici's reign lasted until 1892, and the history of the Society can be divided into four periods: George Rapp, 1802-1847; Romelius Baker, 1847-1868; Jacob Henrici, 1868-1892; and the demise of the Society under John Duss, 1892-1905.

The death of leaders was not the only thing to work a change on the Society. The members were getting old; new members had stopped coming in any great numbers after about 1818. Now, in the middle of the century, the youngest member was middle-aged. The Industrial Revolution came to the United States, and the Society's mills, which had been so advanced in 1830, were becoming obsolete. The Society started to go out of large-scale manufacturing in the 1850's. They went into investments instead. They participated in a wide variety of ventures: railroads, bridges, oil, coal, and manufacturing and banking. They had a wide influence on the development of the northern Ohio River Valley. However, as the century waned so did several aspects of their existence. For one thing, the members were no longer middle-aged, but old. There were no children, and no new blood came to take the place of their dwindling numbers. Thus they were unable to keep up their remaining factories without the help of paid workers. They shut down some factories. With the death of George Rapp some of the vital force must have gone out of the Society. However, to the end of its period the Society gave the appearance of a vital organization which time had forgotten.

In 1890 the Society started selling original land holdings. By 1894 they were selling their surrounding farms. A large portion of this land went eventually to the Berlin Iron Works. When U. S. Steel was formed in 1901, the Berlin Iron Works was absorbed and the name changed to "American Bridge Company." In 1902 the American Bridge started to build a huge plant and a new town next to the old. They called their new town "Ambridge," after American Bridge (1902). And so it has remained.

### THE END OF THE SOCIETY

In 1905 the Society was dissolved and in 1916 the rights of the last members were purchased by the Commonwealth. The assets of the Society were sold, with the exception of the land on which the Museum now stands.

The Harmony Society, founded in 1805 in Harmony, Pennsylvania, builders of three towns in the wilderness, builders of a tremendous industrial empire, waiting in vain for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, with a life of one hundred years, was no more.

In 1916 the area of the present Museum was escheated to the State. It has been operated as a museum since 1919, after coming under the control of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (then the Pennsylvania Historical Commission) in 1917. For a long period it was operated as a museum by the Harmony Society Historical Association (until 1939). Since 1938 the Commission has developed a long-term restoration program under the direction of Charles M. Stotz, and in 1961 a \$550,000 renovation of the Museum was begun. You will see the end product of that program on your tour.

### YOUR TOUR OF OLD ECONOMY

Your tour of Old Economy will cover the center of the old town of Economy. In this area is the commercial center, including some of the shops, the dwellings, and the cultural center of the community. You will have a chance to see the formal garden of the Society, which functioned as the town square.

### THE FEAST HALL

You probably entered in the Feast Hall. This is where the formal feasts of the Society were held. The building functioned as a cultural center very similar to the town hall back in Germany. On the first floor are eight rooms.

### The Museum

The first four rooms were a museum. In 1826-27 the Harmony Society purchased a large quantity of art works and scientific material in Philadelphia. This was set up in the Museum, and a small admission was charged for the privilege of viewing it. When the museum did not pay the Society sold its collection, about 1853. The first room has been reconstructed as their art museum, containing some of the paintings from the Society's original collection. The second room has been constructed into the science museum. The cases are copies of some in the Museum's collection.

On the left, in the first two rooms, is a series of modern interpretive exhibits which tell the history of the Society and which show some of the materials they manufactured.

### The Printing Press

The third room holds the printing press of the Society. A large number of these communitarian societies were active propagandists, who proselytized and believed in the power of the press. Although the Harmony Society believed in education, they did not believe in proselytizing. Also, they were not necessarily intellectual; therefore, they did not feel a great need for a press. However, they evidently had a small engraving press in Indiana for printing cloth labels. While there, they either bought or made the one on exhibit (ca. 1822). On this press they printed several books and several single-sheet items. The press was not operated very much after 1834. Also shown in the printing room is the type case and a display of the Harmony Society imprints. The press was operated by the two doctors, Mueller and Feucht.



## The Adult School Room

The last room in the Feast Hall is the Adult School Room. The Harmony Society conducted a large number of classes for their members. These ranged from engineering courses through science, singing, and drawing. Shown in the room are two book cupboards, which once held the library of the Society, and a static electricity generator. As the Society members grew older they hired more and more workers to replace aging members. They set up a school for the children of these workers on the corner of Fifteenth and Church Streets. The benches and tables in this room are from that school. Also shown are some drawings that possibly were made in this room. The room is heated by a stove---the Society did not use the fireplaces but set up stoves in any rooms they wished to heat.

## The Feast Hall

On the second floor of the Feast Hall is the Feast Hall. Most pietistic societies held several practices in common, and one of these was the Agape or Liebesmahl, or "Love Feast." This was a practice that stemmed from those of the first Christians, who used to gather the whole community and break bread together in a symbolic meal as brothers and sisters in Christ. Among the practices of these societies during the Love Feast was the "kiss of peace," which was administered by each member to his fellow, and the washing of feet. The Harmony Society may not have done this. They held these feasts on the usual Christian holidays, plus on some others such as the Fourth of July, the Harvest Home (August 15), a sort of thanksgiving, and the Harmoniefest (February 15) to celebrate their founding. The whole community gathered at noon. The long tables in the hall were set up in long rows. The women sat on the right and the men on the left. There was a wide aisle down the center. The Trustees and Elders had a table across the front. After the feast there were hymns, a sermon and speeches, and then the Society went back to its tasks. In the evening they assembled again to finish the leftovers. The two pianos were used to accompany hymns.

The iron bars across the ceiling were put there to hold the building together. The vault is not a true arch but is under a gambrel roof carried by large trusses. The flues of the chimneys ran up these trusses and out the center of the roof. This caused an enormous outward pressure on the walls. Therefore, when it started to spread the building had to be tied together or it would have collapsed. The doors in each end of this hall, above the floor, are said to have been used by George Rapp, who would appear and speak to his followers. When anyone speaks from these doors his voice rolls out across the room. When we remember that this was a symbolic meal, perhaps a sacrament, and that George Rapp was the "father" of the Harmony Society, we can well imagine the effect this had on the members.

There is no kitchen on this floor nor in the building. The food had to be carried up the stairs. It was cooked in another building, called the "Feast Kitchen." It is in another building in order to cut down the fire hazard. A female member of the Harmony Society, in, say, 1835, must have made many trips up and down these stairs on feast days carrying food.

## THE FEAST KITCHEN

The Feast Kitchen is located beside the Feast Hall on the north. It

contains twelve large kettles, sometimes called coppers, coffers, or cauldrons. These are built into ovens. The only methods of cooking possible in these are boiling, stewing, and certain types of roasting. The Harmonists, therefore, ate differently than we do. The Liebesmahl was a stew of beef and pork cooked in these kettles. There are two off by themselves which, as the others were allowed to cool, may have been kept warm to heat water to wash dishes. At least two of the feasts were in the summer (July 4 and August 15); and, with the kettles filled with boiling liquids, forty women bustling around, and the hot weather, it must have been very hot in the Kitchen. Therefore, they provided the hood over the ovens, with a hatch in the ceiling, and the heat was allowed to escape through the vents in the roof. You may have noticed these vents as you entered.

The kettles also were used for other cooking needs, such as making apple butter, and were probably used for dyeing and making soap. The kitchen in New Harmony is still called the Dye House. The kettles may also have been used for laundering.

The stone sink in the corner of the room is typical of German architecture. The dishes were washed in a tub and the water poured into the sink to run out through the trough to the outside. Here it was caught by a barrel and picked up periodically by the "slop" man. This is a crude but effective form of sanitation. You also may notice the tinware on the tables and the berry-cooling rack. Also on display are a wine press, a snitz maker, a sausage stuffer, a chopping block, and other utensils. "Snitz" are dried apples.

#### THE CABINETMAKER'S SHOP

The Cabinetmaker's Shop (or, more correctly, Joiner's Shop) was one of the several shops maintained by the Harmony Society to manufacture special items. Furniture was made in this shop. The Harmonists made some rather distinctive furniture inside the German tradition, and we have a large number of these pieces. The Harmonists also bought furniture, some of it used, so you will see a wide range of furniture styles in our collection.

We have set the Cabinetmaker's Shop up as a carpenter's shop. You will see not only the tools of the cabinetmaker but also those of the cooper (barrel maker), shingle maker, and carpenter. In the front of the building is a clock maker's shop.

#### THE FIREHOUSE

This little building contains the big 1826 fire engine of the Society. This machine does not have a suction hose and had to be filled by buckets. Men pumped on the big handles in the ends of the cranks. Also shown in this building is another fire engine, a small pumper built in 1832 which is a more advanced model than the other engine. This one can draw water and did not have to be filled with buckets. The Harmony Society furnished all of the facilities of a city of the day, including fire protection.



## THE GRANARY

The Harmony Society built a granary in the center of each of their towns, while the barns were placed out in the fields. Perhaps it was a symbol of wealth to them to have such a large granary in the center of their town, or perhaps it was because stored grain needed so much care that it was placed where help was readily available. The half-timber first floor is typical of German peasant architecture. The vents are to keep the grain cool. The first floor was used first as a tack room and later for bottling wine. Below it is a cider cellar. Cider was the common American drink of the early Nineteenth Century, not beer.

## THE WINE CELLAR

The members of the Harmony Society had come from a wine-making area of Germany. Perhaps they hoped that they could convert the Americans to wine drinking. In any case, they made large quantities of wine. A large portion of it was stored in this wine cellar, although there were other wine cellars on the grounds. It is so deep underground in order to keep the temperature stable; this is very important in wine making. The stone vault is a good illustration of their abilities as stonemasons. A local tradition states that they built this arch without a falsework by cutting away the ground in the shape of the arch.

Wine was made on the surface of the ground. It was first placed in large vats and crushed. This is the part of wine making about which we hear so many jokes, especially concerning the stamping with the feet. The Society used a grinder for this. After it stood in the vat until the fermentation stopped (a week to ten days), the wine was pressed. The Society had a wine press in the same building in which they had their cider press and steam laundry. At first the Society operated the press by horse power; later they used a steam engine. In its "down" time the engine operated the steam laundry, where members of the Society could wash their clothes in agitator tubs which were operated by the engine and use hot water that was heated in the boiler. There were steam-heated tumble driers which were used on rainy days.

The wine was led into the tuns in the Wine Cellar by hoses and then aged. When it was ready for sale it was put into casks and rolled up the rack on the stairs by means of the windlass. Originally most of the wine was sold by the barrel, not by the bottle. When the Society members grew older they started to bottle their wine, and later still they sold not only their wine but also the use of their name. The wine was bottled and sold under the Economy label for many years.

They also made whiskey, beer, cider, and boneset bitters. For a while, at least, the Society used to distribute free beer on the Fourth of July to celebrate both the national holiday and their own arrival in this country.. Their whiskey was famous, although they did not drink it themselves. After they stopped making whiskey they sold their name to a distillery, and Old Economy Whiskey was made until prohibition was adopted (1920), outliving the Society by many years.

## Espaliers

You may have noticed the espaliers, or trellises, on the side of the building. These are used for growing grapes; they are not just ornamental. The sun warmed the bricks and they in turn warmed the grapes, thus increasing

the sugar content. By careful trimming, the Harmonists might have been able to get several bushels of grapes of a very high quality from one of these vines. These grapes were used for making special jellies or wines.

### THE TAILOR SHOP

Above the Wine Cellar is the Tailor Shop. This building was part of the commercial center of the Society. It contained more than the tailor's shop, for there also were a milliner's (hat maker's) shop, a large cobbler's (shoemaker's) shop, and a barber shop. It would be considered a haberdashery.

### The Barber Shop

The northeast room was used as a storage area and as a barber shop. In it can be seen the barber chair which was probably made by a member of the Society. Men were allowed to grow beards if they wished. They evidently were not allowed to have moustaches, perhaps for the same reason that the Amish do not today---it is too military.

### The Tailor's Shop

The building was called after this shop in which the Society made clothes for its members and for others. In it can be seen the two tailor's benches. The tailor sat cross legged on the large bench, which is actually a large table, and had room for spreading out his work. The sewing machine was not invented until 1846-54, and before that everything was sewn by hand. The long table on the side is a cutting table. The table in the center is an ironing table rather than an ironing board, although they did have sleeve boards. The irons were sometimes called "sadirons" and were heated on the stove. One of these irons weighs seven pounds, so it is easily seen why they were called "sad." Some of them had removable handles in order to keep the handle cool while the iron was heating. In the window is a tailor's lens, which is a glass bottle. When it was filled with water and had a candle behind it it acted as a lens and concentrated the light on the work.

### The Cobbler's Shop

One of the skills that the Harmonists found in demand on the frontier was shoemaking. They had to provide shoes for their members, and they found that these had a ready sale to the public. At Economy they kept a large number of shoemakers busy; as evidence of this we have fifteen benches in our collection. They made shoes as late as 1895 and these were sold next door in the Store. The clerk's desk is where the accounts of the shoe shop were kept. When the members became too old to make shoes the Society hired shoemakers. You may notice the last stand holding the shoe lasts, or forms. Most of these have no left or right but were made to fit either foot. The expression "fits like an old shoe" thus must have had a poignant meaning for these people.

### The Milliner's Shop

Above the Tailor's Shop was a hat-making shop. We have some of the equipment, which is on display. Eventually the Museum will set up a Milliner's Shop so it can be seen how the hats were made.



## The Weaving Exhibit

The Harmonists' prosperity was based primarily on the manufacture of cloth. To show how this was done we have set up a cloth-making exhibit. The entire process is set out in this room, from the carding of the wool to the weaving of the cloth. Shown is a large loom. The Harmony Society used not only this type of loom, which is hand operated, but they also had powered looms. It is felt that they may have been the first to introduce powered looms to Indiana. However, they went out of large-scale cloth production by the middle 1850's.

In the attic of the Tailor Shop there is provision for the storage of grain. This probably was used only during the peak of the harvest, but it does illustrate something of the economical use of space by the Society.

## THE STORE

As a manufacturing society, the Harmonists had to have an outlet for their goods. Also, they bought a large number of manufactured items from the East and from Pittsburgh, and these needed a distribution point. This was taken care of in the Store.

### The Store

The storeroom itself is the main reason for the existence of this building. This is the largest room in the building and was used as the sales center for the manufactured goods of the Society. The Society also had to buy a large quantity of items they could not, or did not, make for themselves. These also were sold in the Store and consisted mainly of such things as brassware, glassware, chemicals, fine china, and similar things.

The way in which the Store was operated was relatively simple. An individual member, if he needed anything, came to the store and drew what he needed. This was entered against his account. So long as he did not draw too much or live in too worldly a manner he received what he needed. Need was the key to the whole thing. Unlike the planned economies of the modern socialistic states, the Harmony Society was organized. Instead of saying that everyone was entitled to a brass pot one year, whether he needed it or not, and none the next year, they tried to provide all that the individual member needed. If he needed six pairs of shoes a year, he received them; if only one pair was needed he received only one pair. It was only when they thought that a member was wasting the community's resources that they stopped him. The household was the unit which was primarily responsible for the distribution of goods---not the individual. On the other hand, non-members living nearby were permitted to come to the store and buy things. Thus they had two types of economy side by side: the company-store economy of the communitarian society and the free American economy. They got along very well.

Near the window of the store is the post office. This is a counter-top affair and was probably made by the Society. Since the Society was the whole community they had to provide all the services of the community, including the post office. One of the storekeepers was the postmaster. The large amount of their correspondence we have in our collection attests to

their need for the post office.

In the center of the room is a stove with the flue going up through a hatch in the ceiling. Anyone familiar with these iron stoves will know that the stove pipe gets hot enough to light a cigarette. Rather than waste this heat the Harmonists ran it up through the hatch and put a round drum on the flue. This caught the waste heat and heated the upstairs. We have one of these drums on display.

### The Counting Room

Behind the Storeroom is the Counting Room. Everyone knows the old nursery rhyme where "The King was in his Counting House." This is the counting house, or business office, of the Harmony Society. The storekeeper, Romelius Baker, had it furnished not only as an office but also as a pleasant living room. Important visitors often were entertained here. The Society handled over a million dollars in gross sales in a ten-year period, and this was the office where a large amount of that was handled.

### The Shoe Store and Milliner's Shop

The other large room in the Store is the Shoe Shop. Here the products of the cobbler's shop were displayed and sold. Hats made by the Society also were sold here, and the long table was used as a display counter. The second floor was used as cloth storage, and it is possible to see the hatch in the ceiling where bolts of cloth could be sent down.

### The Doctor's Office and Apothecary Shop

Beside the Shoe Store are two rooms, the first of which is the Doctor's Office. Here can be seen the large medical charts, the cabinets used to store medicines, and the examination table. The desk was once the property of Dr. Conrad Feucht and the chairs were made for him. The first doctor, Johann Christoph Mueller, was a well-rounded man. He was not only the doctor, he was the druggist, the printer, the music teacher, one of the founders of their museum, and a leader of the Society. Doctors Mueller and Feucht probably were among the few trained doctors in the entire area from Sewickley to Beaver Falls. The doctor's office and apothecary shop, along with the warm hearts of the Harmony Society, may have been a Nineteenth-Century version of the medical center.

The Apothecary Shop next to the Doctor's Office shows what the drug store of Economy looked like. This drug store was probably well run, because the doctors were chemists of high order.

It will be noticed that the west side of the building has a courtyard where a wagon could be driven. A pulley was attached to the gable and goods could be hoisted to the doors in the second floor and attic. In the heyday of the Society this little yard must have been very busy, with wagons coming and going and goods being hoisted up and down from the Store.

### THE TYPICAL DWELLING - The Baker House

Next to the Store is a typical dwelling of the Harmony Society. The Society mass-produced these buildings. The houses may have been prefabri-



cated, as they certainly are very much alike. There were about forty-three of the brick houses and forty-five of the wood, and about nine one-story houses made mostly of wood. A large number of these still stands. The houses are similar in that they have the door on the side which enters under the stairs into a vestibule. On the first floor are a kitchen and a large living room, and many of the houses had a wooden addition attached to the back. The second-floor plan is the same as that of the first floor.

Most communitarian societies tried to break up the family, and the society then would become the family of the members. In order to do this they generally, but not always, practiced celibacy and, as a by-product of this, used cloisters. Although the Harmony Society was celibate it did not break up the family; hence the use of these houses instead of cloisters. However, they did have cloister-like buildings in Indiana, and in Economy they had large buildings which must have been used as such for a few of the unmarried members. People who were married when joining the Society were permitted to remain together. Normally there were six to eleven people in one of these houses. It is difficult to say what the living arrangements were, but probably the men slept in one part of the house and the women in another. One of the women acted as a housekeeper, while the rest of the household went out each day to its assigned work, returning for the main meal. They ate five meals a day. Beside each house was a kitchen garden where each household grew vegetables, flowers, herbs, and medicines.

The Baker House is arranged, to the best of our knowledge, as a typical house would have been. In the kitchen is a rack containing some of the Harmonist pottery and some of the cooking and dinnerware they probably purchased from the East. All of the cabinets are of Society manufacture. The kitchen contains a stone sink similar to the one in the Feast Kitchen; you may notice that there are no modern conveniences whatsoever.

The living room is literally that---the household lived there. There is the dining-room table, where they ate. You may notice how low it is. Evidently the Harmonists adhered to the 19th-Century practice of sitting up to but not under the table. There are no closets in the house, so everything was placed in chests or wardrobes. In their individual homes the Harmonists did not have many items which we would consider decorative, for they considered that "living worldly." The bench is of Harmonist manufacture and was considered adequate for comfort. Anyone working a ten- or twelve-hour day probably would find it very comfortable. The desk in the corner is typical of the Harmony Society---they worked standing up. The house was heated by a Franklin stove and not by the fireplace. The rear room has been set up as a bedroom for two people. In these houses the members of the Harmony Society lived in a rather plain manner but quite comfortably. They probably lived as well as upper middle-class American farmers of the day.

### The Family Shed

Behind the house is a wood shed, or family shed. Every house had one of these, although one shed might have been shared between two houses. In the shed were kept firewood, tools, the outhouse, goats, chickens, and, if the Society at the time did not have a dairy herd, a cow. The center room is for the storage of food. Below it is a root cellar, while above is the hay loft, and in the rear is the outhouse. It is a mill-type building, and the heavy timbers holding it up can be seen. The timbers are cut with a straight, or "pit" saw, and are held together by square pegs in round holes. These held better than iron.

### The Kitchen Garden

Around each house was a small garden in which vegetables, flowers, and herbs were grown for the household, and each house was responsible for its own garden. The Baker House has such a garden. Normally this house would have had a much larger lot next to it; in fact, it would have been over four times the area of the house. The house had to be moved to make way for highway construction, so the garden is greatly reduced in size. However, it is possible to see the type of garden such a house would have had. The gardens must have made the houses very pretty in the summer. This one has been planted by the Piccadilly Garden Club.

### The Street

The street which runs in front of these last three buildings was once the main street of the town of Economy. For a while it must have been the only paved street in the town, and these are the original cobbles. It ran from the river to the road the Harmonists built to encourage people to visit the town. The Harmony Society manufactured a great quantity of products which was shipped out via steamboat or flat boat at the wharf; thence to Pittsburgh or as far as New Orleans. Along the high road, the present Merchant Street, came the mainstream of the traffic flowing from Pittsburgh to the Great Lakes at Erie, Pennsylvania. In turn came the products which the Society purchased for its own use or for resale. When we recall that the Erie Canal opened the same year that the Harmony Society moved back to Pennsylvania (1825), we realize that they were in a vast swirl of trade which involved them in all the commerce of North America. A large portion of this went over the cobblestones of this street.

### THE GREAT HOUSE GARDEN

"There is no stopping nor retrogressing in the Kingdom of Heaven, but a pressing forward to a goal where a temple of God is erected in a green and tranquil and delightful valley, that those who are susceptible of light may find consolation and repose, and worship in the holy Tabernacle, in order and harmony." (George Rapp, et al), Thoughts on the Destiny of Man, particularly With Reference to the present times; by the Harmony Society in Indiana, A.D. 1824, p. 11.

The other two villages had Squares in the center of the towns, but Economy had a garden instead. George Rapp thought of it as his garden and it still is called the "Great House Garden," but it evidently was used by the whole Society. This garden is modeled after gardens which the Society members had seen on the estates of nobles in Germany. These nobles in turn had been copying similar gardens in France, so what we see is a result of all of this influence modified by the experience of the Harmonists in this country.

### The Wall

The stone wall on the north side of the garden is a feature of German



gardens; it keeps off the cold north wind. In the spring the sun, reflected off the south side of the wall, creates a little warm, frost-free zone which can be used to start hardy plants. There is a local tradition that this wall was built in one day by the male members of the Society in order to show what can be done with a community. This is unlikely, but it is an illustration of people's belief in the power of community action. There are slots on top which held, perhaps, espaliers for grapes. The wall also must have served to keep the noise of the busy street out of the garden.

### The Grape Arbor

The large fan-shaped grape arbor in the northwest corner of the garden did not arrive there by accident, although it looks a little out of place in the formal garden. The earth excavated from the buildings across the street was used to build this hill. There were no bulldozers when this was built, and the dirt had to be handled by wheelbarrow. Therefore, the dirt did not have to be carried very far. The hill, in turn, provides the good drainage and the southern exposure which are so necessary for good grapes. If we figure about one-half bushel from each vine in a good year we can see that they probably could have harvested about one hundred and fifty bushels from this little hill. George Rapp had been a vine dresser in Germany and perhaps he took care of this vineyard himself. On top of the hill is a little arbor where one could be alone if he wished. There are two other similar arbors in the garden.

### The Pavilion

In the center of the Garden is the Pavilion. This was built in 1831 and probably was designed by Frederick Rapp, who may have started life as a stonemason. It is in the shape of a hexagon, with the roof supported on stone lintels in the shape of flat arches. It is surrounded by a pond which was constructed in 1832. The Harmony Society was buying water pipe as early as 1825, and the original pond must have been supplied with water through one of its early systems. The Society also had equipment to make its own wooden pipe. The Pavilion is surmounted by finials in the shape of urns full of fruit. These finials were designed and created by a Pittsburgh artist, Joseph Woodwell. They originally were done in wood but have been re-created in stone, as it is more permanent. Four of the original six wooden finials are still in existence, and two are in the Museum's collection, having been donated by Mr. and Mrs. J. Knowles Woodwell. The reproductions are the gift of the Robinson family.

In the center of the Pavilion was a statue of a woman playing a lyre. She was done by the famous Philadelphia artist, William Rush. She was about life-size and probably was intended originally to be "Water Nymph," or something similar. The Harmony Society commissioned her as "Harmonie." Eventually her feet deteriorated and she was placed in the Grotto. There are two traditions concerning her final destruction: one, that she was burned for firewood; the other, that she was thrown in the river. However, she was destroyed before anyone photographed or made a drawing of her. She has been re-created under the direction of Ralph E. Griswold, the landscape architect, and the artist Louis Vergobbi. The re-created "Harmonie" also was donated by the Robinson family.

Surrounding the pond is a trellis for grapes. This made the Pavilion a little island of serenity in the midst of the garden for anyone wishing to

meditate. The small brass band of the Society is said to have serenaded the villagers from the top of this structure on warm summer evenings, although they probably played from the grape arbor. There once was a circular stairway to the top of the Pavilion, although this may have been added later.

### The Grotto

In each of their three homes the Harmony Society built a little grotto, where the leaders, at least, could meditate. This one is in the shape of an European dovecote, or granary. Every European farm had one of these in the days when the pigeon was the staple meat bird instead of the chicken. The richer the farmer, the bigger his dovecote. The Harmonists adopted this shape as they wished to have a contrast between the rough exterior and the finished interior. This was an idea they had received through the second-hand influence of the Chinese on the Germans (through the French). The Chinese like these studied contrasts between the formal and the informal and the finished and the crude. They want an aesthetic effect, while the Harmonists wanted a religious effect.

The exact meaning of the symbolism of the Grotto is lost. The rough exterior was contrasted with the classical-revival interior, which was finished as a Greek temple. This contrast probably was meant to represent the beautiful soul inside the ugly body of man. The only symbol to which any exact meaning may be attached is to a flower resembling a lotus in the center of the dome. It could be considered the lily, which to them foretold the approaching millennium:

"How extraordinary and astonishing that the Lily should make its appearance, just at the time when the moral faculties of the whole human mass were almost exhausted and decayed..." (George Rapp, et al), Thoughts on the Destiny of Man, particularly With Reference to the present times; by the Harmony Society in Indiana, A.D. 1824, p. 9)

The rest of the decorations' meanings are obscure, if they had any meaning. Certainly we can ascribe the Trinity to the three windows, the Godhead to the single flagstone in the center, etc; however, these meanings are not at all certain. The four panels set forth the important events of the Society's life. Three panels commemorate their three homes in the United States, while the fourth panel, "The Traveler's Disappointment," may represent the disappointment of these chiliasts that their fourth home was not heaven.

The Garden represents the best efforts of the Ambridge Woman's Club, the Garden Club of Allegheny County, and Ralph E. Griswold, internationally-known landscape architect, of Griswold, Winters and Swain, Pittsburgh, and the staff of the Museum.

### THE GREAT HOUSE

The Great House was the home of George Rapp and his family and, as such, represents the governmental center of Economy. The house consists of a two-story center portion plus two wings, with a two-story house attached to the north wing. The latter was the home of Frederick Rapp, George Rapp's adopted son. The Great House was probably built in sections, with



the wings being built after the center portion. Here George Rapp lived with his wife, daughter and granddaughter. When Rapp died the ruling member of the Society continued to live here along with Rapp's family, so that the house remained the center of the community.

The Harmony Society may have been a sect advocating communitarianism, sharing, and brotherhood, but it did not advocate equality for its leaders. Each member received according to his need and, naturally, one took better care of one's father than of oneself. In this house George Rapp lived like a German gentleman or petite noble, or, more accurately, as a patriarch.

### Your Trip Through the Great House

You probably will enter the Great House through the hall in the wing between the Great House and Frederick Rapp's House. You will notice on the left a small bedroom decorated with Harmonist furniture. This was the room of a servant, and beyond you may see another servant's room. You then will pass through a short hall where you may see the vault of the Society. At one time the Society kept about \$500,000 in gold here, which they said was to be used to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. This hall leads to George Rapp's room, and then you will go into the Trustee's Room and through to the Dining Room and out through the Kitchen.

In the center or two-story portion of the Great House are four rooms. The two on the north side are set up as bedrooms, although they originally may have been intended as dining room and library. The rear room is Jacob Henrici's bedroom. When George Rapp died (1847) Romelius Baker, the Senior Trustee, took over the reins of the Society. When he died (1868) Jacob Henrici assumed control. Henrici ruled until 1892. He occupied both of the rooms on this side of the house. The room set up as his bedroom actually was his office; hence the bars on the windows. You may notice the large safe in the corner. The essential conservatism of the Society can be seen by the furnishings of this room which are not much different than the furnishings in rooms furnished fifty years earlier.

The front bedroom on the north side is furnished as George Rapp's bedroom. Although he may have lived upstairs for a while, he used this room as his bedroom and the rear room as an office. The bed and the large chest are said to have been Rapp's. The rest of the furnishings, while they may not have belonged to him personally, are typical of the Harmony Society. It is difficult to say how the room of this charismatic mystic would have looked.

The other two rooms in the two-story section are the parlors. The rear parlor is commonly called the Reception Room. This was used as a living room and also for small business suppers. It was a place in which to close a business deal, and that is how it got its name. The front room is the "Sunday" or best parlor of the Great House. It is commonly called the Trustee's Room. This is set up as a formal drawing room. It was here that the members of the Great House came after church to sing hymns. The Marquis de Lafayette, Rudyard Kipling, and Charles Dickens, among others, were entertained in this room. The Trustee's Room is perhaps the most accurately-restored room in the Museum, as a large portion of the furniture is original.

The Dining Room is in keeping with the elegance of the Trustee's Room. This is where the family ate its regular meals and where the formal dinners

to entertain visiting people of importance were served. The wine cupboard is said to have been in the room and was eventually taken to Florida, from where it was purchased by the Commonwealth. With the exception of a few Harmonist-made pieces, the furniture is of the type one would expect to find in this room. You may notice the glass and china in the cupboard. Some of this is of Pittsburgh manufacture and is similar to that which graced the table in this room.

Behind the Dining Room is Gertrude Rapp's bedroom. Perhaps she originally slept upstairs and this room was built for her when she was too old to climb the stairs. However, it was not uncommon to have bedrooms on the first floor in this period. On the wall are some pieces of art which may have been created by Gertrude. She was a vivacious, talented woman who had most of her grandfather's vitality, intelligence, and leadership abilities, with charm and good looks as well. She was born in 1808, a year after the rule of celibacy was adopted. She was one of the leaders of the Society and was the head of the silk industry, which was one of the prizes of the Society. In the corner is her spinning wheel. Women of that day were not like "the lilies of the field." Most of the furniture is of Harmonist manufacture. You may notice especially the small writing table and bureau, which are among the finest pieces turned out by Harmonist craftsmen.

The last rooms are the kitchen and the pantry. The meals for the Great House were cooked here. The large hearth evidently was used only at an early stage and after that an iron cook stove was used. In the corner is a stone sink similar to the ones found in the Baker House and the Feast Kitchen. In one corner is a rack holding examples of Harmonist-made pottery. Notice the small "cheese safe" by the door. This was used to store food in the absence of refrigeration.

### THE KITCHEN GARDEN

Behind the Great House is the Kitchen Garden. Every house had a kitchen garden, and you may already have seen the one at the Baker House. The garden for the Great House is larger because the Great House had servants. In this garden were grown salad materials, table vegetables, flowers and herbs. In the center of the garden is a sundial. This is a copy of one in the Museum's collection which probably was designed and built by Frederick Rapp, who was a stonemason. The copy is a gift of the Garden Club of Allegheny County. The Garden Club also was instrumental in setting up the Kitchen Garden; the Herb Garden was planted by the Herb Society. At the end of the Kitchen Garden is a modern greenhouse, which is the center of all the activity in the Garden. It sits near the site of the Bakery.

### THE CARRIAGE HOUSE

The Carriage House was where the vehicles for the use of the Great House were stored. As early as 1825 the Society bought a gig for the use of Father Rapp. In the Carriage House is Father Rapp's carriage, which is a large phaeton-type vehicle. It was built about 1844 when Rapp would have been eighty-six years old, and it probably was built to help the old man travel more comfortably. The Carriage House was used as a sort of barn and there is provision to store hay in the loft.



## THE SUMMER KITCHEN

The Summer Kitchen of the Great House filled the same function as did the family shed to the Baker House. It was used as woodshed, toolroom, etc. One large room at the north end was a summer kitchen. This was used to cook meals on hot days, when the big iron stove in the kitchen would have made the room unbearable. The cooking was done in two small coffers built into an oven. The primary purpose of this room was for washing clothes, and the room functioned as the laundry of the Great House. It is often called the "Wash Kitchen," although Gertrude Rapp often used it to make jelly.

The building presently is occupied by a small gift shop of the Harmonie Associates, and the visitor is encouraged to browse. The Harmonie Associates is a volunteer organization attached to the Museum, and you are encouraged to join.

The last item of interest to be seen when leaving Old Economy is the pump. At one time one of these stood on almost every square and furnished water for the villages. This one was located near the Great House for the convenience of the residents of that house.

## END OF TOUR

You have just finished your tour of Old Economy. The staff and volunteers of the Museum have tried to make your visit an enjoyable one, and we hope that you will return again. Before you leave Ambridge we hope that you will take time to see some of the landmarks of the Harmony Society which are outside of the Museum but which still stand in the area.

## IN THE AREA

### The Church

The Harmony Society Church stands directly across from the Great House. It was the second church of the Society in Economy. The first was a wooden structure which still stands on Fifteenth Street. The present church was started in 1827 and finished in 1831. The clock and bells were added shortly thereafter. The church is now St. John's Lutheran Church (A.L.C.). It has the proud claim that it is the only building in Economy which has an unbroken history of continuous occupation and use for its original purpose. You may visit the church with the permission of the pastor.

The church is oriented east-west, as are most Christian churches, but the Harmonists' services were conducted from the south side under the oval window. The original pews still stand in the church. These were once ranked on either side of the prayer desk, facing east or west, and in the rear (north) they faced the desk. At the west end is the organ loft, which has been expanded from its original size. The windows at the east end were added by the present congregation, which was formed in 1907. The present altar also was put in by the congregation of St. John's. The Harmonists, good pietists that they were, did not have an altar. It is an interesting thought that the Harmony Society, who were rebels from the Lutheran Church, should have their church building returned to the Lutheran Church.

## Houses

The town of Economy extended from about the present Tenth Street to about Sixteenth Street and from the river to the present railroad spur. In this area of about eighteen blocks they had their factories and approximately one hundred houses. About sixty of their houses still survive, and you can wander down the quiet streets of lower Ambridge and get the feel of the old town of Economy. These houses were, for the most part, mass-produced, as was the Baker House, and all look alike.

## The Harmony Society Cemetery

The Harmony Society, in preparing for the millennium, had to make allowance for the members who died before that event came to pass. Therefore, they had to have a cemetery. Since they expected the millennium very shortly they also expected that the dead members would be resurrected to pass before the judgment seat, so there was little need to commemorate the departed person. This is a belief commonly held in pietistic societies. Therefore, each brother was buried in the order in which he fell, and each had the same bare coffin and narrow plot without a tombstone. After all, this was to be a temporary home. When visiting the Harmony Cemetery at the present Eleventh and Church Streets you will find a bare field. Underneath sleep almost six hundred of the departed members of the Society. The staff at Old Economy has planted a decorative garden of flowers, which the members loved so well, over the graves; other than this no feature breaks the ground where these refugees from religious persecution rest in peace.



Bibliography: If you would like to know more about the Harmony Society you may wish to read some of the following books. This list has been made of books which are readily available and it does not represent a complete list by any means. Some of these are available in the Old Economy Store. For serious students there is a much more extensive bibliography available at the Museum office.

Arndt, Karl J. R., George Rapp's Harmony Society 1785-1847, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965). This is the best book on the Harmony Society to date and contains an excellent bibliography.

Duss, John S., The Harmonists: A Personal History, (Harrisburg: 1943). The second-to-last trustee tells what happened after he was in control; very poor history.

Gormly, Agnes Hays, Old Economy: The Harmony Society, (Sewickley, Pennsylvania, 1910; reprinted 1966).

Knoedler, Christiana F., The Harmony Society (New York, 1954). Author was born at Old Economy.

Williams, Aaron, The Harmony Society of Economy, Pennsylvania, (Pittsburgh: 1866). Until Arndt the best work on the Society; text was read and approved by the Society before publication; part on religion excellent.



## CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

The restoration is not the quick and happy thought of a moment, but the patient work of many people over a period of almost fifty years. It is fitting that we mention here some of the many helpers, as a small part of the appreciation due their efforts. The Harmony Society Historical Association was the first group to try to preserve Old Economy. The Harmony Advisory Committee helped get the necessary funds for restoration. Charles and Edward Stotz, the architects, were among the first to realize that Economy had some architectural merit and encouraged the Commonwealth to do something about it. Mr. Charles M. Stotz, of Stotz, MacLachlan and Hess, worked and waited for over twenty-seven years to see this dream realized. The Ambridge Woman's Club worked on the garden when no one saw any possibilities in Old Economy, and they still retain an interest. The landscape architect, Mr. Ralph E. Griswold, of Griswold, Winters and Swain, in consultation with Mr. Stotz, realized the possibilities of the garden and helped rally support to make this one of the best garden restorations in America. The Garden Club of Allegheny County has been able to translate the dream of Mr. Griswold into reality. The Harmonie Associates, successor group to the Harmony Society Historical Association and several other groups, has helped develop support for Old Economy and build a program for it. The Mellon-Scaife Foundation made possible the setting-up of the archives of the Harmony Society and aided in the restoration. Their funds made possible the play "Man's Reach" and the purchase of the Harmonie Associates' House. The Junior League was very helpful at a time when few others cared. Dr. Lawrence Thurman, the former Curator of Old Economy, was the first professional curator and saw the restoration project through from the first. The members and staff of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and Old Economy have worked long and hard to make this museum possible. Finally, to the many, many volunteers, too numerous to mention, who have worked unrewarded for years to make Old Economy a success, go special thanks for all of the many things they have done.

We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to Miss Louise Serack and the Ambridge Senior High School for the mimeographing of this guide.







